

Cultural Relations in the Plateau of Northwestern America 3

Plateau culture could hardly be more grossly misinterpreted. Proof of this is contained throughout the following pages. Spinden was led astray in two ways: first, he interpreted the heavy Plains overlay that he found among the Nez Percé as typical of the Plateau; secondly, he found few autochthonous ideas because he was doing pioneer work and his brief investigation failed to bring them to light. 114
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The individuality of Plateau culture was first emphasized by Spier in his illuminating survey based upon Klamath customs.³ Spier's task was specifically that of placing the Klamath in proper cultural setting; at the same time the Plateau was given its first general orientation. The data available to him were insufficient, however, to determine intra-areal relations. But in recent years the Plateau has been receiving a greater share of attention, with the result that no large portion remains entirely unknown.

An attempt is here made to describe the conditions under which the cultural diversity of the Plateau has developed; further, to picture the conceptual structures of various significant complexes in Plateau culture. Several fundamental complexes from the Plateau stock are examined, but no attempt is made to exhaust that stock. Social life receives a considerably greater share of attention than material culture. The former has proved more satisfactory for comparative study, partly because of the nature of the complexes, and partly in consequence of the quality of the available data. And possibly a bias of the author is reflected. 121

For the most part the structures examined are those within the Plateau since the objective is a picture of intra-areal relationships. But not infrequently the paths followed lead into adjacent areas, and sometimes into the problems of those areas. 121
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used throughout to designate both Sanpoil and Nespelem; the cultures are identical (Ray, *Sanpoil and Nespelem*). 101
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The Sahapcin-Shoshonean boundary represents conditions prior to 1800. During the nineteenth century this boundary was situated somewhat farther south. This movement is discussed by Ray and Others, *Tribal Distribution*. 147
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³ Spier, *Klamath Ethnography*, pp. 224-325.

NATIVE VILLAGES AND GROUPINGS OF THE COLUMBIA BASIN

I.

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131 Detailed and reliable information regarding the locations of Indian villages and territorial distribution of native groups holds a wide range of interest and value for the historian, geographer, archaeologist, and ethnologist. Unfortunately this type of information will be all but impossible to obtain from the Pacific Northwest within the space of a few years. It has been in the hope of saving as much of this important data as possible that the work leading to the presentation of this paper has been pursued.¹

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173 All of the material here recorded has been gathered directly from native informants with the exception of supplementary data quoted from the work of other ethnologists who have been engaged in the same field. Informants were selected so that the information was furnished from direct experience or from knowledge gained from parents or others of the same generation. Many of the villages here named and located were birth-places or residences of informants themselves or were visited by them during youth.² A few villages in the area had been

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115 ¹This work was accomplished through the sponsorship of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.

²The principal informants used were as follows:

Lakes: James Bernard. Bernard was half Lakes, half Chinese, but had lived all his life with the Lakes. In 1931 he was perhaps eighty years old, the best informed and oldest surviving member of his group. He spoke English but very brokenly. From early in the present century until his death in 1934 he was chief of the few surviving members of the Lakes.

Kalispel: Bob Sherwood, a well educated, intelligent and affable Kalispel half-breed of middle age. Sherwood speaks both Kalispel and English fluently. He now lives near Uak, Washington.

Coeur d'Alene: Antelope, a middle-aged native who speaks some English but was never much influenced by whites. Information that he furnished was given with first-hand certainty. In 1934 Antelope lived near Worley, Idaho.

Spokane groups: Thomas Garry, an Upper Spokane aged about seventy-five years. His son and granddaughter served as interpreters. All are now resident near Gerome, Washington.

Sawpoil, Nespelem and Colville: Bob Covington, John Tom, William Burke. Information concerning these informants will be found in the preface to Verne F.

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very often impossible to make any use of what might otherwise be valuable material because of the distortions and variations in the recording of native words.'

Further, I feel that it is methodologically preferable to handle separately data from field research and from historical sources unless they are distinctly supplementary one to the other or provide a check one upon the other. Important generalizations which might come from independent treatment are in danger of being lost by joint treatment in an attempt to reconcile apparent contradictions which are almost certain to be present in the two sets of data.

Finally, and to sum up, the object of this paper is to present a limited amount of reasonably complete and accurate source material of a usable nature, material which may be checked and supplemented in the field and from which tenable generalizations may be drawn.

II.

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The physiographic province known as the Columbia Basin is the geographic unit which most nearly coincides with the cultural area here considered. The Basin is bounded on the west by the Cascade mountains, on the south by the Blue mountains, on the east and the north by relatively low lying extensions of the Rocky Mountains, particularly the Selkirk range and the Okanogan Highlands. The habitat of the northeasternmost peoples here treated extended for some distance into the Northern Rocky Mountain province.

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Geologically the Columbia Basin is strikingly characterized by a succession of lava flows reaching a thickness of 4000 feet in some places. The Columbia river, which drains all of the Basin as well as large adjacent areas, has cut a huge canyon hundreds of feet deep through this bed of basalt. The bed further has been broken up by gorges cut by ancient streams and by the river at times when it temporarily was blocked from

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⁷Such distortion is of course unavoidable without an adequate method of phonetic transcription. For reference to the method now in use see footnote 37.